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Board of Management human resource management practices and students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya. Effective human resource management is critical for ensuring that schools are staffed with qualified, motivated, and professionally competent personnel who can deliver quality education. Although Boards of Management have a statutory role in supporting human resource management, persistent challenges such as teacher shortages, insufficient professional development, limited staff motivation, and low academic outcomes remain prevalent in many public day secondary schools. The study was guided by Open Systems Theory and employed a correlational research design. The target population included Board of Management members, principals, heads of departments, prefects, County Directors of Education, and Sub-County Directors of Education from public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties. A sample of 361 respondents was selected through stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and simple linear regression, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicated a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between Board of Management human resource management practices and students' academic outcomes ($r = .605$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis demonstrated that human resource management practices

significantly predicted students' academic outcomes (β = .605, t = 13.727, p < .001) and accounted for 36.6% of the variation in students' academic outcomes (R^2 = .366). The study concludes that effective staffing, teacher supervision, professional development, teacher motivation, and staff welfare significantly contribute to improved students' academic outcomes. It is recommended that the capacity of Boards of Management in human resource management, teacher support, and staff development programs be strengthened to enhance academic outcomes in public day secondary schools.

Key terms: Board of Management, human resource management, teacher motivation, professional development, academic outcomes, public day secondary schools, Kenya

Introduction

Students' academic outcomes are a key indicator of educational effectiveness globally. The attainment of quality learning outcomes largely depends on the presence of competent teachers, effective staff supervision, professional development opportunities, teacher motivation, and supportive school leadership structures. Human resource management is therefore a critical aspect of educational management, as teachers and other school personnel directly influence curriculum delivery and learners' academic achievement. Effective human resource management enhances instructional quality, teacher commitment, and students' academic outcomes (Abenaitwe, 2025; Karngbeae, 2023).

School governing bodies worldwide play a significant role in supporting human resource management within educational institutions. School boards participate in policy formulation, staff welfare, staff supervision, and the creation of conducive working environments that foster effective teaching and learning. Evidence from the United States, the United Kingdom, Ghana, Tanzania, and other educational systems demonstrates that effective management of educational personnel positively influences school performance and learner achievement (Amakyi, 2022; Chen, 2022; Daniel, 2024; Government of UK, 2023).

In Kenya, Boards of Management are mandated to support staffing, employee welfare, discipline, guidance and counseling, and the overall management of human resources in secondary schools (Republic of Kenya, 2013). Effective execution of these responsibilities is expected to foster favorable conditions for quality teaching and learning. Nevertheless, many public day secondary schools continue to face challenges such as teacher shortages, limited professional development opportunities, insufficient staff motivation, and declining academic outcomes. These issues raise concerns about the effectiveness of human resource management practices within schools.

This study was guided by Open Systems Theory, which conceptualizes schools as open systems that transform educational inputs into outputs through interconnected organizational processes. Human resource management practices are considered essential educational inputs that influence teaching and learning processes and ultimately shape students' academic outcomes (Bertalanffy, 1968; Lunenburg, 2010). Effective staffing, teacher supervision, professional development, motivation, and staff welfare are therefore anticipated to enhance educational outputs.

Previous research has explored teacher motivation, professional development, staffing, and school management practices as determinants of students' academic achievement. However, empirical evidence on the specific influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya, remains limited. This knowledge gap provided the rationale for the present study.

To determine the influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya. Embu Counties, Kenya.

Research Question

What is the influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya?

Research Hypothesis

H_0: Board of Management human resource management practices have no statistically significant influence on students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya.

Literature Review

Human resource management is a vital aspect of educational management, as it encompasses the acquisition, development, motivation, supervision, and retention of personnel necessary for schools to operate effectively. Educational institutions rely on qualified and motivated teachers, school leaders, and support staff to deliver quality education and achieve desired learning outcomes. Consequently, effective human resource management significantly contributes to institutional effectiveness and students' academic success. Common human resource management practices include staffing, professional development, motivation, supervision, performance management, employee welfare, and discipline (Suite, 2025; Ineye, 2024).

Research conducted in various educational contexts has demonstrated that teacher adequacy and competence significantly influence students' academic outcomes. Schools with sufficient numbers of qualified teachers are better equipped to deliver the curriculum effectively and provide individualized learner support. Conversely, teacher shortages often increase workload, diminish instructional effectiveness, and negatively impact students' academic achievement. Studies further indicate that schools experiencing staffing challenges frequently record lower academic performance compared to adequately staffed institutions (Adegbola & Adeleke, 2023; Karngbeae, 2023).

Professional development represents another critical dimension of human resource management. Ongoing training enables teachers to enhance instructional practices, curriculum interpretation, classroom management, learner assessment, and the integration of emerging educational technologies. Evidence from Nigeria, Tanzania, and the United States suggests that teachers who participate in professional development programs demonstrate greater effectiveness than those without such opportunities. However, limited financial resources and insufficient management support frequently restrict teachers' access to professional development programs (Daniel, 2024; Ineye, 2024; Suite, 2025).

Teacher motivation is a key determinant of educational effectiveness. Recognition, promotion opportunities, performance-based rewards, supportive supervision, and improved working conditions can enhance motivation. Motivated teachers typically exhibit greater commitment to instructional responsibilities, dedicate more time to supporting learners, and participate actively in school programs. In contrast, low motivation may reduce productivity, increase absenteeism, and negatively impact learners' academic outcomes (Government of the UK, 2023; Kamonge, 2021; Karngbeae, 2023).

Educational Educational governance structures are instrumental in supporting effective human resource management. School governing bodies are responsible for facilitating adequate staffing, monitoring

employee performance, supporting staff welfare, and providing strategic direction for institutional improvement. Effective governance fosters accountability, enhances employee commitment, and creates conducive learning environments. As a result, schools with effective governance structures are more likely to achieve improved educational outcomes compared to those with ineffective governance practices (Amakyi, 2022; Chen, 2022; Republic of Kenya, 2013). Kenyan education system, Boards of Management are legally mandated to support human resource management through employee welfare, discipline, guidance and counselling, recruitment of non-teaching staff, and support for quality education. Despite these responsibilities, many public day secondary schools still face teacher shortages, limited staff welfare programs, inadequate professional development opportunities, and declining academic outcomes. Previous studies have examined school management practices, staffing, teacher effectiveness, and educational leadership. However, empirical evidence remains limited on the specific influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties. This study therefore sought to address this knowledge gap.

Conceptual Framework

The study was guided by the premise that Board of Management human resource management practices influence students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools. Human resource management practices served as the independent variable and included staffing, teacher professional development, teacher motivation, teacher supervision, and staff welfare. Students' academic outcomes represented the dependent variable and were measured using indicators of academic achievement. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between these variables.

Source: Researcher (2026)

Methodology

This study employed a correlational research design to examine the influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya. This design was appropriate as it enabled the establishment of the nature, strength, and direction of the relationship between the study variables without manipulating the study environment (Creswell, 2014).

The target population included Board of Management members, principals, heads of departments, prefects, County Directors of Education, and Sub-County Directors of Education from public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties. The independent variable was Board of Management human resource management practices, comprising staffing, teacher supervision, teacher professional development, teacher motivation, and staff welfare. The dependent variable was students' academic outcomes. A sample of 361 respondents was selected using stratified sampling, purposive sampling, and simple random sampling techniques to ensure adequate representation of all respondent categories. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table.

Data collection involved the use of questionnaires and interview schedules. Questionnaires were administered to Board of Management members, principals, heads of departments, and prefects, while interview schedules were used for County Directors of Education and Sub-County Directors of Education. Questionnaires were deemed suitable as they facilitated data collection from a large number of respondents within a relatively short period, whereas interview schedules enabled the collection of in-depth information from education administrators (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Orodho, 2004).

The research instruments were subjected to expert review to establish content validity. Pilot testing was

conducted to determine the reliability of the questionnaires. The instruments achieved reliability coefficients above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 recommended for educational research, indicating sufficient reliability for data collection (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise the data. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis determined the strength and direction of the relationship between Board of Management human resource management practices and students' academic outcomes. Simple linear regression analysis was subsequently conducted to assess the extent to which human resource management practices predicted students' academic outcomes. The null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative data obtained through interviews were transcribed, organized, and analyzed thematically. These qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results and provided deeper insights into the influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes by triangulating evidence from different respondent categories (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Ethical clearance and research authorisation were obtained from the relevant authorities prior to commencing the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. The study adhered to established ethical principles governing educational research involving human participants (Creswell, 2014).

Findings and Discussion

Response Rate and Respondent Characteristics

Data were collected from respondents in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties. The respondents included Board of Management members, principals, heads of departments, prefects, County Directors of Education, and Sub-County Directors of Education. The diversity of their roles in school governance and administration provided valuable insights into Board of Management human resource management practices and students' academic outcomes.

Table 1Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Respondent Category	Kitui (n)	Embu (n)	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
Board of Management Members	96	70	166	46.0
Principals	7	5	12	3.3
Heads of Departments	30	22	52	14.4
Prefects	73	53	126	34.9
Sub-County Directors of Education	2	1	3	0.8
County Directors of Education	1	1	2	0.6
Total	209	152	361	100.0

Note. The study comprised 361 respondents drawn from public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties.

The study collected data from 361 respondents, including 166 Board of Management members (46.0%),

126 prefects (34.9%), 52 Heads of Departments (14.4%), 12 principals (3.3%), three Sub-County Directors of Education (0.8%), and two County Directors of Education (0.6%). Among these, 209 (57.9%) were from Kitui County and 152 (42.1%) from Embu County. The diversity of respondents enhanced the credibility of the findings by incorporating perspectives from key stakeholders in human resource management and school administration.

Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices

Respondents indicated their level of agreement with statements concerning Board of Management human resource management practices. These statements addressed staffing, teacher supervision, teacher professional development, teacher motivation, and staff welfare.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices

Human Resource Management Practice	Mean	SD	Interpretation
BOM members are trained in human resource management	1.91	0.59	Disagreed
Teachers are motivated	2.74	1.08	Disagreed
Human resource committee exists in the school	2.57	0.98	Disagreed
Human resource committee meets when required	2.48	0.89	Disagreed
BOM motivates teachers	2.79	1.07	Disagreed
Teachers' welfare programmes exist in the school	2.55	1.01	Disagreed
BOM participates in teacher discipline management	3.17	0.79	Agreed
Teachers who perform well are recommended for promotion	3.02	1.12	Agreed
Teachers are adequate in the school	1.16	1.13	Disagreed
Teachers experience high workload	3.70	0.76	Agreed
BOM sponsors teachers and HoDs for professional development	1.98	1.00	Disagreed
Overall Mean	2.64	0.95	Disagreed

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

The results in Table 2 indicate that Board of Management human resource management practices were generally inadequate in the sampled public day secondary schools, as reflected by the overall mean score of 2.64 (SD = 0.95). Respondents disagreed that Board members had received adequate training in human resource management (M = 1.91, SD = 0.59), that schools had effective teacher welfare programs (M = 2.55, SD = 1.01), and that teachers and Heads of Departments were adequately supported through professional development programs (M = 1.98, SD = 1.00). These findings highlight weaknesses in staff development, capacity building, and employee welfare.

Similarly, respondents reported inadequate teacher motivation (M = 2.74, SD = 1.08) and limited functionality of human resource committees (M = 2.57, SD = 0.98). Teacher adequacy received the lowest rating (M = 1.16, SD = 1.13), while respondents agreed that teachers experienced high workloads (M = 3.70, SD = 0.76). These findings indicate that many schools face human resource constraints that could undermine effective teaching and learning.

However, respondents agreed that Boards of Management participated in teacher discipline management

(M = 3.17, SD = 0.79) and recommended high-performing teachers for promotion (M = 3.02, SD = 1.12). Although these findings demonstrate active involvement in certain human resource functions, substantial gaps persist in staffing, professional development, motivation, and staff welfare.

These findings are consistent with studies conducted in Nigeria, Liberia, Uganda, and Tanzania, which reported that inadequate staffing, weak teacher motivation, and limited opportunities for professional development negatively affect educational quality and learners' academic achievement (Adegbola & Adeleke, 2023; Karngbeae, 2023; Kamonge, 2021; Daniel, 2024). The results further support Open Systems Theory, which posits that human resources are critical educational inputs influencing school processes and, ultimately, educational outcomes.

Relationship Between Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices and Students' Academic Outcomes

To determine whether a relationship existed between Board of Management human resource management practices and students' academic outcomes, Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Between Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices and Students' Academic Outcomes

Variable	r	p
Human resource management practices and students' academic outcomes	.605	< .001

Note: $p < .05$ (two-tailed).

The correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between Board of Management human resource management practices and students' academic outcomes ($r = .605$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that schools with effective staffing, teacher supervision, professional development programs, staff motivation, and welfare support tend to achieve better academic outcomes than schools where such practices are weak.

The results indicate that enhancements in human resource management practices strengthen teacher commitment, instructional effectiveness, and learner support, which in turn improve students' academic achievement. These findings reinforce the central proposition of Open Systems Theory, which posits that effective management of organisational inputs contributes positively to desired educational outputs.

Influence of Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices on Students' Academic Outcomes

To determine the influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted. Tables 4, 5, and 6 present the results.

Table 4 Model Summary for the Influence of Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices on Students' Academic Outcomes

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of Estimate
.605	.366	.364	.41214

Note. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Management Practices.

The model summary results indicate that Board of Management human resource management practices explained 36.6% of the variation in students' academic outcomes ($R^2 = .366$). This finding demonstrates

that human resource management substantially predicts students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools. The remaining 63.4% of the variation is likely attributable to other factors, including curriculum implementation, financial management, learner characteristics, parental involvement, and school leadership practices.

Table 5. ANOVA Results for the Influence of Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices on Students' Academic Outcomes

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	32.006	1	32.006	188.422	< .001
Residual	55.375	326	0.170		
Total	87.381	327			

Note. Dependent variable: Students' Academic Outcomes. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Management Practices.

The ANOVA results indicated that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 326) = 188.422$, $p < .001$. This confirms that Board of Management human resource management practices significantly explain variation in students' academic outcomes.

Table 6 Regression Coefficients for the Influence of Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices on Students' Academic Outcomes

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	1.395	0.120	—	11.622	< .001
Human Resource Management Practices	0.589	0.043	.605	13.727	< .001

Note. Dependent Variable: Students' Academic Outcomes.

The regression coefficients indicated that Board of Management human resource management practices had a positive and statistically significant influence on students' academic outcomes ($\beta = .605$, $t = 13.727$, $p < .001$). The regression coefficient ($B = 0.589$) suggests that a one-unit improvement in human resource management practices would result in a corresponding 0.589-unit increase in students' academic outcomes.

Based on the regression results, the null hypothesis that Board of Management human resource management practices have no statistically significant influence on students' academic outcomes was rejected. It is therefore concluded that Board of Management human resource management practices significantly influence students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya.

Regression Model

The regression model derived from the study findings was expressed as:

$$Y = 1.395 + 0.589X + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y= Students' Academic Outcomes

X= Board of Management Human Resource Management Practices

1.395= Regression Constant

0.589= Regression Coefficient

ε= Error Term

The model indicates that a one-unit improvement in Board of Management human resource management practices would result in a 0.589-unit increase in students' academic outcomes.

The findings affirm Open Systems Theory by demonstrating that effective human resource management, as a critical educational input, significantly influences educational outputs as reflected in students' academic outcomes. Schools that invest in teacher welfare, professional growth, motivation, supervision, and adequate staffing are more likely to achieve improved academic performance compared to schools where these practices are insufficient.

The findings demonstrate that Board of Management human resource management practices are important determinants of students' academic outcomes and provide empirical evidence supporting the study's hypothesis and conceptual framework.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of Board of Management human resource management practices on students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kitui and Embu Counties, Kenya. The findings established that Board of Management human resource management practices had a positive and statistically significant influence on students' academic outcomes. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between human resource management practices and students' academic outcomes ($r = .605$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis further demonstrated that human resource management practices significantly predicted students' academic outcomes ($\beta = .605$, $t = 13.727$, $p < .001$). Additionally, the findings indicated that human resource management practices explained 36.6% of the variation in students' academic outcomes ($R^2 = .366$).

The study concludes that effective staffing, teacher supervision, professional development, teacher motivation, and staff welfare contribute significantly to improved students' academic outcomes. Schools where Boards of Management effectively support human resource management are more likely to achieve improved teacher commitment, instructional effectiveness, and learner achievement. Conversely, weaknesses in staffing, teacher welfare, motivation, and professional development may negatively affect teaching and learning processes, resulting in poor academic outcomes.

The findings further support Ludwig von Bertalanffy's Open Systems Theory, which postulates that effective management of educational inputs influences organizational processes and ultimately educational outputs. Human resource management thus remains a critical determinant of students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

The Ministry of Education should strengthen the capacity of Board of Management members through continuous training on human resource management, teacher supervision, staff welfare, performance management, and educational leadership.

Boards of Management should prioritize teacher motivation programs through recognition, support mechanisms, conducive working conditions, and promotion of staff welfare to enhance teacher commitment and instructional effectiveness.

School administrators and Boards of Management should strengthen support for professional development programs to enhance teachers' pedagogical competencies, curriculum implementation skills, and integration of emerging educational technologies.

The Teachers Service Commission and the Ministry of Education should work closely with Boards of Management to address teacher shortages and ensure equitable staffing in public day secondary schools.

Boards of Management should strengthen mechanisms for performance monitoring, mentorship, staff support, and employee welfare to improve educational effectiveness and students' academic outcomes.

Future studies should examine the influence of Board of Management human resource management practices in other counties and school categories to enhance the generalizability of these findings.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to educational management literature by providing empirical evidence that Board of Management human resource management practices significantly influence students' academic outcomes in public day secondary schools. The findings established that human resource management practices explained 36.6% of the variation in students' academic outcomes, demonstrating the importance of governance-related human resource functions in improving educational effectiveness.

The study further extends the application of Ludwig von Bertalanffy's Open Systems Theory in educational management by demonstrating that human resource management practices constitute critical educational inputs that influence school processes and ultimately determine students' academic outcomes. Effective staffing, teacher supervision, professional development, motivation, and staff welfare are important predictors of learner achievement.

Additionally, the findings provide policy-relevant evidence for educational policymakers, Boards of Management, school administrators, and the Teachers Service Commission regarding the importance of strengthening human resource management practices to improve academic outcomes in public day secondary schools in Kenya.

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